

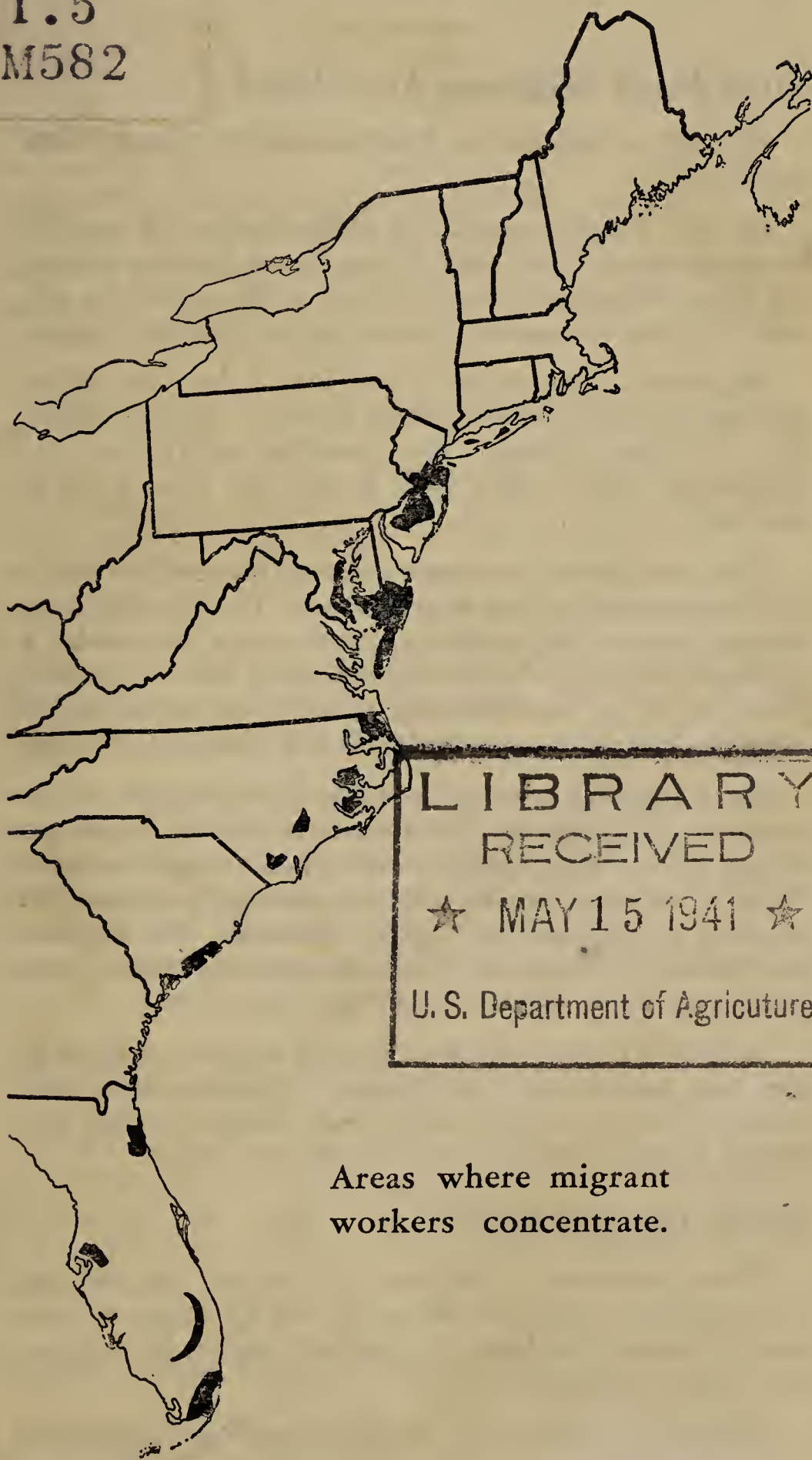
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MIGRATION ON THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Areas where migrant
workers concentrate.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Security Administration

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MIGRATION ON THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD

How Many Migrants Are There?

All over the country, at least two million people follow the crops.

On the Atlantic coast, the concentration of migrant workers varies—from 2,000 in one South Carolina county for a few weeks each year, to about 5,000 workers in several New Jersey counties from mid-July through August.

Migrants on the Atlantic seaboard follow the potato harvest, for instance, from State to State—from Hastings, Fla., in April, through the Carolinas to Virginia and Maryland, then finally, New Jersey and New York in late July.

This march of workers from one crop harvest to another has been caused by two developments: (1) The shift from general farming to intensive specialty crops has created a seasonal demand for more workers than can be supplied locally; (2) the overcrowding of worn-out farms in the South has forced thousands of farm folk to migrate for jobs.

Most migrants working in potatoes, berries, onions, or tomatoes are Negroes. Their earnings are low; housing is almost nonexistent. Many communities and growers have little or no resources to meet the sudden pouring-in of workers at harvesttime. Often, therefore, the migrants are housed in unoccupied boxcars, packing sheds, or in barns and shacks on the farms where they work.

Interstate migration does not affect as many workers as the local migrations. For instance, the strawberry harvests in North Carolina alone draw between 15,000 and 20,000 workers from a radius of only 75 miles.

What Can Be Done.

Where demands for migrant workers are heaviest, the Farm Security Administration has set up camps to provide temporary shelter, plus sanitary facilities, washing, and laundry equipment.

The *kind* of camp built depends largely upon the type of work in the area, how long the work lasts, and the number of workers who usually come for the harvest.

Kinds of Camps.

Standard camps, located where seasonal work runs continuously for at least 6 months, usually have frame or



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metal shelters for 200 to 350 families; a community building for church services and other meetings; a utility building with showers, toilets, and laundry; a clinic in charge of a registered nurse; and modern sewer-disposal plant.

Mobile camps, used in areas with short seasons of a few weeks, are made up of tents and tent platforms transported by truck to the camp site. Water, power, and light are supplied from specially built trailers. The mobile camp, usually for 200 families, also has a shower, laundry unit, and community tent for church services and other meetings. The camp is completely dismantled when the work is over and moved to the next area on its route. Where distances are so great as to make these "traveling camps" impractical, another kind of camp—the light construction type—has been developed.

Light-construction camps are a cross between the standard and mobile camps. Set up on approximately 20 acres, the only permanent structures in this camp are the community, clinic, and utility buildings. Tents and platforms are set up for workers when the season is in full swing, and are stored in the community building when the work is done, until the camp reopens next season.

These camps do away with the cost of moving tents and platforms; they are designed especially for areas where work lasts from four to six months.

Five standard camps are now located in Florida. The need for additional camps on the Atlantic seaboard can probably be met by the mobile- or light-construction type if the seasons of peak labor demand are short. Where work is spread out over several crops in one area, the season is prolonged and may call for a more permanent type of camp.

What Camps Do For Growers.

Where camps have been set up, growers find they have a more orderly labor supply of better-housed and better-fed workers. The pressure of overcrowding and the menace of insanitary conditions are removed from the community.

What Camps Do for Migrants.

The camps enable migrant workers to live under sanitary conditions, afford clinical care, a chance for personal cleanliness, wholesome recreation, and adequate temporary shelter.

Each family at the camp registers with the State Employment Service to obtain as much work as possible to increase its earnings.

What Has Been Said About the Camps?

From Gresham Chamber of Commerce, Ore.:

“ . . . the Mobile Migratory Camp established here during our small fruit season . . . has benefited the farmers and the town, as well as the transient seasonal workers considerably It is our desire that this Camp be operated next year.”

From President, Bank of Pahokee, Fla.:

“ . . . we feel confident that should a migratory camp be established here that the better class of labor could be encouraged and the farmer and packing-house operator be greatly benefited.”

From President, Brandon Brokerage Company, Canal Point, Fla.:

“ . . . in our capacity of growers and packers we have seen the need of shelter of any kind whatsoever increase year by year . . . we join with the community in offering to cooperate in any manner that we can in helping the Government in the camp's location here.”

From Yuba City Commercial Association, Calif.:

“ . . . we welcome the establishment of the Yuba City Migrant Camp . . . we are also taking an active part in improving roads leading to the Camp.”